



## **STARTING A NEW FARMERS' MARKET IN MARYLAND**

### **Most important considerations:**

- What is the purpose of the farmers' market? Does it fill a need in the community?
- Is there an established market nearby the new market location? Check [www.marylandsbest.net](http://www.marylandsbest.net) to see what markets are already in the area.
- Is there enough demand in the neighborhood to sustain a(nother) farmers' market?
- Will someone be dedicated to continuing, managing, and growing the market after it has been started?

### **Further considerations:**

#### ***Marketing and Operational Plan***

- a. What type of legal entity will the market be? A nonprofit, part of a sponsoring agency, none of the above?
  - i. Will the market need a bank account?
- b. Who will sponsor the market?
  - i. Is there a local nonprofit that might be interested?
  - ii. Are there community organizations whose mission would dovetail with hosting a farmers' market?
- c. Who will organize the market?
  - i. The market should have one main point of contact to coordinate with state, county, and local agencies.
- d. Who will recruit the farmers?
  - i. For farmer listings, check the Maryland's Best program site: [www.marylandsbest.net](http://www.marylandsbest.net) which lists farmers and markets so that whoever is recruiting vendors can see what vendors are already selling in the area of the new market and might want to add markets to their schedule.
- e. What is the proposed day of operation? Hours? Season?
  - i. Is this most convenient for those who will be shopping at market?
  - ii. Is there a local senior center or WIC clinic that might be issuing Farmers' Market Nutrition Program checks to be used at market at certain times?
- f. Who will make the rules? Will the market be producer only\*?
  - i. How will the rules be enforced?
  - ii. Will there be a vendor agreement?
- g. Will there be a Market Master dealing with issues that arise on market day?
  - i. Who will be responsible for placing traffic cones around the perimeter of the market? Handling trash? Putting up, taking down, and storing signs, banners or tents and tables?



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

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## Office of Marketing, Animal Industries & Consumer Services

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- ii. Will the Market Master be paid? A volunteer? A vendor? Consider the issues associated with the arrangement chosen.
  - h. Who will market the Market?
    - i. How will the market attract customers?
  - i. Who will handle publicity?
  - j. Who will bear the cost of advertising?
  - k. Who will handle the finances for the market? (Insurance costs, bank account, shared costs of advertising, financial management, etc.)
- II. Demographics
  - a. Where will the customers come from?
  - b. Are there office buildings or other employment clusters close to the site? How many, number of workers, distance?
  - c. How many daily customers per vendor are you anticipating?
    - i. Will these customers provide enough sales for vendors to want to participate week after week?
  - d. Are there any significant cultural or ethnic factors that should be considered?
  - e. What type of vendor mix do you plan to have?
    - i. Does this match what your customers want to buy at market?
  - f. Will any of your customers be eligible for federal nutrition program benefits? Will they want to be able to use these benefits at market?\*
- III. Proposed Location
  - a. Is the market site visible from well traveled roads and streets?
  - b. Is the site served by public transportation?
    - i. Does public transportation run when the market is open?
  - c. Who owns the property on which the market would be located?
    - i. Is a lease or rental agreement needed?
    - ii. Will there be rent to pay for the site?
  - d. Will the location be available for the foreseeable future?
  - e. Is a Farmers' Market an acceptable use for the property under county zoning laws?
  - f. Are any permits or licenses required?
    - i. For the market and/or the vendors?
    - ii. See [www.blis.state.md.us](http://www.blis.state.md.us) and the forthcoming MDA document on regulations, as well as contact county governments and health departments.)
  - g. If the market is located in a commercial area (Main Street, Shopping Center), will it be welcomed by existing businesses or seen as competition?
    - i. Is parking available?
  - h. Are there other Farmers' Markets nearby?
    - i. Within a 5-mile radius?



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- ii. Check [www.marylandsbest.net](http://www.marylandsbest.net) to see what markets already exist.
- i. Are there other outlets for produce and the other products you plan to offer in the area?
  - i. Roadside/farm stands?
  - ii. Grocery stores?
- j. Are there local senior centers or WIC (Women, Infants & Children) clinics that might be issuing Farmers' Market Nutrition Program checks nearby?
  - i. Find a list of Maryland senior centers here:  
<http://www.mdoa.state.md.us/seniorcenterslist.htm>
  - ii. Find a list of WIC county points of contact here:  
[http://fha.maryland.gov/wic/wic\\_apply.cfm](http://fha.maryland.gov/wic/wic_apply.cfm)
- k. Can a sign(s) be legally set up at the market location? Just for market day or for the entire season?
- l. Will the market have dedicated free parking for customers?
  - i. If so, how many spaces?
  - ii. Is this enough for your estimated number of customers during the market hours?
- m. Will vendors and/or customers have access to restrooms close by?
- n. Can vehicular traffic in the actual market area be securely controlled during market hours?
- o. Does the site offer weather protection (under cover, shade trees, buildings to cut wind)?

\* *Producer Only:* Vendors only sell agricultural or food items that they themselves have grown or produced. Purchased products such as wholesale or re-sale may not be sold.

\*\* See the MDA resource "Federal Nutrition Programs at Maryland Farmers' Markets"

### **Other sources of information:**

County and regional Agricultural Marketing Professionals

County Extension educators

County departments of economic development, health, and planning and zoning

### **On-line references for more information about starting a farmers' market:**

[www.blis.state.md.us](http://www.blis.state.md.us) (information on permits and licenses)

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3022129>

<http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/current-initiatives/national-farmers-market-network>

<http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources/>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY639>

[www.newfarm.org/features/2006/0206/frmmrkt/king.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/features/2006/0206/frmmrkt/king.shtml)

[www.wvu.edu/~agexten/farmman2/managers.htm](http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/farmman2/managers.htm)



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### ***Example: Frederick County (other locations may differ)***

If the location is on private property, it needs site plan approval from the county's Department of Planning and Development Review. If the location is already an existing business and is looking to allow for a farmer's market on the property, then it would be a staff level review, since there is already an approved site plan on the books with the county. However, you would still need to get approval from the county to add this additional business entity on the property (since the initial site plan was not approved to allow for a farmers' market)

If this is on Residential or Agricultural Zoned land, that is more complicated and would probably need a clarification from the County Zoning Administrator.

If this is on Public Property (owned by a town, a county, a state or federal government), the site plan would not be needed and as far as I know there would not be any licenses needed to start the market. As far as Health Department, there is no health department license to my knowledge in Frederick County. If the market wants to be certified by MDA to allow for FMNP WIC and Senior checks, the market has to be established for more than one year, the majority (50% or more) of the vendors must be food sellers and the market has to be inspected by MDA.

I would make sure you had guarantees from farmers in the area that they will sell at your market if you start up a market. That is the most difficult thing to do. There are very few farmers in the area that sell to the public, and the ones that do are committed to several markets now.

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